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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHISINAU 000397

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STATE FOR EUR/UMB

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL VOTE POSTPONED UNTIL JUNE 3;
EXTRA TIME TO SEEK COMPROMISE

Classified by: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On May 28 the Parliament gathered for the anticipated presidential voting. The Communists proposed a postponement until June 3, which passed. The time between the Parliament's initial failure to elect a president on May 20, and the May 28 session has been filled with meetings attempting to bring the Party of Communists (PCRM) and opposition parties together, as well as cajoling and some ugly threats. European Union Special Representative Kalman Miszei had been actively trying to promote reconciliation. Meanwhile, Ambassador Chaudhry also met repeatedly with all sides to assess their positions and assist the process. Opposition leader Serafim Urechean (Our Moldova Alliance, AMN) reported numerous calls and threats over the previous days. Realizing that holding the presidential vote on the 28th would result in a second failure (which would require repeat parliamentary elections to be scheduled), the PCRM appears to be stalling for time for a last-ditch effort to find additional votes. End Summary.

Ambassador Asked to Approach Opposition

¶2. (C) On May 20, in the hours following the Parliament's initial failure to elect a president, Deputy Speaker and PCRM politician Grigoriy Petrenco called on the Ambassador. Petrenco said that Acting President Voronin had personally requested that Petrenco seek the Ambassador's assistance in determining whether the opposition would be open to dialogue. The Ambassador underlined that a compromise required each side to give up something, and tried to ascertain what the Communists would be willing offer to win opposition support. However, despite repeated efforts, Petrenco was not ready to identify what the PCRM would put on the table.

¶3. (C) Within the next 24 hours, the Ambassador met the three opposition leaders represented in the Parliament to discuss this question. Liberal Democrat (PLDM) leader Vlad Filat responded by stating repeatedly that that he was open to dialogue. However, he noted that he had openly put forth conditions for dialogue, and wanted guarantees that his conditions would be met. Additionally, Filat confided, he would be willing to cast his vote if Marian Lupu were the PCRM's presidential candidate. Filat complained that, although Miszei was sincere in his efforts to broker an agreement, he was insisting too much, and overdoing it, creating resistance to his

message on the part of the opposition. Filat noted that there had been various PCRM approaches, from Presidential Advisor Marc Tkaciuk, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Vladimir Turcan, and now Petrenko, and asked that the Ambassador have President Voronin clarify who was empowered to negotiate on behalf of the PCRM.

14. (C) AMN leader Urechean responded that under the right conditions he would agree to a dialogue. He ruled out any discussion with Petrenko (claiming he irritated people), but stressed that there were definitely starting points for negotiations. He noted with concern that, if repeat parliamentary elections were held, the Communists might emerge with the minimum 67 votes required to pass any laws or constitutional amendments they wished. Urechean said he understood the risks of negotiating with the Communists (i.e., being marginalized by his electorate as Christian Democrat leader Iurie Rosca had been for negotiating with the PCRM in 2005), but said that he was willing to take the risk. Even the hardline Liberal Party (PL) leader Mihai Ghimpu, did not rule out sitting down at a table with the PCRM, though he did underline that he would not negotiate with them.

15. (C) Though the Ambassador reported back to Petrenko on May 21 that at least two of the opposition parties were willing to talk, we heard no further response from the government side about

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this initiative. We did hear various reports of efforts by Kalman Miszei to broker meetings, and were aware that such meetings were taking place.

Marc Tkaciuk Asks Ambassador to Meet with Urechean

16. (C) On the evening of May 27, with the presidential vote scheduled for the next day, Presidential Advisor Marc Tkaciuk called on the Ambassador and asked him to meet Urechean in the morning, before the parliamentary vote. Tkaciuk noted that on the previous day (May 26), he had believed that the PCRM and the opposition had shaken hands on a deal. However, Tkaciuk said, by the following morning, when Urechean and Filat were supposed to meet Voronin at 11:00 A.M. to confirm the deal, the two opposition leaders said they could not proceed, because their people did not want them to do so. Tkaciuk noted that private polling data suggested that in repeat elections Urechean's AMN might not even cross the six percent threshold.

Urechean Speaks of Calls and Threats

17. (C) In an early morning meeting on May 28, Urechean noted that the day's parliamentary session would be a historic moment for Moldova. He described the previous two days and nights as tumultuous, filled with calls and threats. He claimed that the opposition had looked for compromise, but that the Communists did not want to find it. He admitted to having a private conversation with Mark Tkaciuk (which was secret from the public) in which Tkaciuk urged him to provide the "golden" votes. They met again together with Filat, most recently on May 27. Urechean claimed that Tkaciuk believed the opposition would vote with the Communists "because he was talking but not listening to their

arguments." Urechean told us that at that morning meeting with Tkaciuk on May 27 at 11:00, he (Urechean) had announced that there was no deal. Urechean said that his party members and electorate did not want a deal, and stressed the importance of demonstrating that the opposition could be firm and present an alternative.

18. (C) Urechean reported that of his eleven MPs, five had been contacted and urged to betray their party. He said that the previous day (May 27) threats had started to flow. Urechean said that because of the pressures three of his regional party leaders (in Cimislia, Ungheni and Soroca districts) had suffered heart attacks. Urechean claimed the Communists had threatened that they "had 101 methods to cause them all heart attacks." Urechean went on to explain that on the 27th his phone had rung non-stop; Tkaciuk called twenty times, and Voronin called a couple of times, but he did not answer the phone. Miszei's assistant came to him to tell him to pick up the phone. Urechean said he was told that he had to go to meet Voronin, and almost forced to do so. At 8:00 P.M. on the 27th, Urechean was called and threatened that the government would launch a massive criminal case against him and other AMN members, if he did not cooperate. However, Urechean waved these threats away, saying he was not guilty of anything and hence not afraid.

18. (C) Urechean noted that there were two persons in Filat's PLDM party who were more vulnerable. He mentioned in particular a Mr. Furdai, who previously had served as head of MoldovaGaz. The Ambassador noted that he had also heard this name several times from other interlocutors. Urechean said he had information from the Prosecutor General's office that criminal charges could be brought against Furdai. Urechean also mentioned a member of his own party, Vyecheslav Platon, who has been in Moscow since before the opening of the first parliamentary session on May 5. Urechean explained that Platon had a personal business conflict with President Voronin's son, Oleg, and so had been in Moscow "for health reasons." Urechean said he had personally instructed Platon to leave.

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Comment: The Drama Continues, Final Act Uncertain

19. (C) The Moldovan elections drama remains a cliff-hanger. The PCRM has bought itself a few extra days to find opposition members of Parliament who will vote for a PCRM president. There is no doubt that meetings, calls, and threats will continue. We also believe that any substantive compromises or change of presidential candidates is unlikely; the opposition will probably stand its ground. If the PCRM leadership were ready to undertake serious negotiations, a deal could be found. The threats reported by Urechean suggest that the PCRM has become desperate, and turned to playing hardball. Far more productive would be a real discussion of conditions and issues.

10. (C) One element of this drama concerns the fate of the previous Speaker of Parliament, Marian Lupu. Filat had confidentially indicated to us that if Lupu were the PCRM's presidential candidate, Filat would be willing to make a compromise. While Acting Prime Minister Zinaida

Greceanii has already been chosen as the PCRM's candidate for president, theoretically she could step down, and a legal way could be found to hold new nominations. Such details are not spelled out in the law on electing a president. At this point, the PCRM seems more bent on threats than on a constructive effort to meet the opposition's conditions.

¶11. (C) If the parliament fails to elect a president on June 3 then, according to the law, repeat parliamentary elections must be held. It is not clear whether the PCRM would actually win more votes in a repeat round. Small opposition parties that failed to make it over the six percent threshold will be scrambling to cast their lot with other parties to ensure that their votes are not wasted. It will be a challenge to ensure the transparency necessary to guarantee that the results will not be questioned a second time. Without massive work cleaning up the voter lists, the same problems will only be repeated. Society is deeply split, and prolonging the crisis for a second round of elections will not heal the rift. Moldova remains for now in a state of political crisis.

CHAUDHRY